



# TRAIL TALK

**FY 2013 WRAP UP EDITION**

**CONASAUGA RANGER DISTRICT**

We have completed another year of great stewardship on the Conasauga Ranger District. I would like to start out by thanking everyone for their dedication to this amazing resource. We have documented over 5,000 hours of volunteer time and completed some great projects which have made a huge difference. These projects have been achieved with the participation of many groups including: Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia, Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia, Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Co-Trails, Conasauga District Trail Volunteers, Ellijay Mountain Biking Association, Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association, Kirk's Cycle, Girl Scouts of America, Southern Area Wilderness Stewards, Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Biking Association, and Trout Unlimited. This edition of **Trail Talk** will include volunteer activities starting in July and end with the **23<sup>rd</sup> Volunteer Appreciation Picnic** on November 9<sup>th</sup>. It was a wonderful year and I hope you all enjoy reading about it.

Even though July was a scorcher, it was beautiful on top of Hickory Ridge for the Team Conasauga Workday. **Jim Bishop, Kevin Phillips, Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, Travis Sanchez, Justin Sanchez, Amos Burrell, and Larry Thomas** made the trek up to Hickory Ridge for vegetation work. Although the hike in was long it was well worth it for the cool breeze blowing on top. We completed approximately 2 miles of trail, finishing at the East Cowpen Junction, and had a great time doing it.



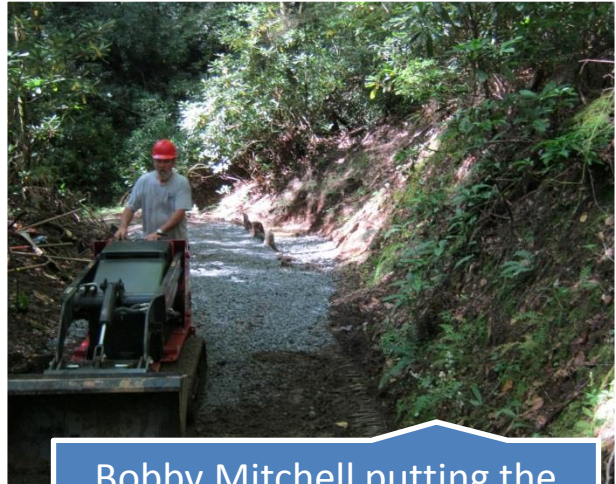
Travis Sanchez making the climb to the top of Hickory Ridge.

Unfortunately, I missed the August Working Weekend #69, but from what I heard it was a great time. Our newly forged trail crew leader, Chuck Brock, stepped up to lead the group in my stead. On Friday, **Chuck Brock, Jim Leatherwood, Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, and Jim Bishop** braved the heat and sling bladed the top of Tearbitches trail. On Saturday, **Wanda Brown, Tom Owens, Jim Leatherwood, Robert Edmondson, Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Wayne Pattillo, Amos Burrell, Michael Henninger, Larry Thomas, Carlos Martel, and the fearless leader Chuck Brock** finished up the work on Tearbitches trail and were also able to do some trail maintenance on Emory Creek trail. Thanks again to everyone, especially Chuck for leading this great Working Weekend!

September was a busy month with many volunteers working on a variety of projects and National Public Lands Day Events. **Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, and Jim Bishop** kicked off the month on Thursday, the 5<sup>th</sup> with trail maintenance and vegetation work on the Hemp Top trail. **Tom and Tannis Blackwell** worked Friday as well. Between the two days they were able to complete work all the way Double Spring Gap. Great Job!! Our **National Public Lands Day** was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September at upper Panther Creek trail. **Gail Milner, Michael Henninger, Jim Bishop, Amos Burrell, Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, Larry**

**Thomas, Jeana Thomas, Jim Leatherwood, Heather Phillips, Kevin Phillips, and Wanda Brown** tackled this rough section of trail. We did some light brushing on East Cowpen trail and then undertook the dense vegetation on the upper section of the Panther Creek trail. We accomplished all we set out to do and even managed to put in some much needed water bars.

Also in September we had a trail maintenance project on the South Fork Trail to repair a lingering mud hole. On Friday September 27, we met on the north side of the trail to improve drainage and install gravel at a pesky spring head. **Carlos Martel, Carol Martel, Joanne Mitchell, Bobby Mitchell, Howard Kyle Jr., Nanci Tarrant, and Kathleen Corcoran** were present to tackle the project. Bobby started with the trail machine to establish



Bobby Mitchell putting the final touches on the South Fork Trail Project.

the drainage and the rest of us laid the geo-fabric, filled it with large gravel, and made the drainage burrito. On Saturday September 28, **Carlos Martel, Carol Martel, Joanne Mitchell, Bobby Mitchell, Hanley Rose, and Kathleen Corcoran** came back to haul the fine gravel to cap the work and put the finishing touches on the great looking project.

## FY 13 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

We had a lot to celebrate this year on the Conasauga Ranger District in regards to our Volunteers. We had a grand total of 5,292 hours of volunteer time reported this year. That's the equivalent of three full-time Forest Service employees. This year's overall achievements include routine maintenance performed on over 65% of the district's total trail miles, the completion of the Beech Bottom trail re-route, and a total of four sponsored events on National Trails Day and National



Public Lands Day. We welcomed 17 new volunteers to the district this year, some of whom are well on their way to becoming a “regular” face at our work days.

To celebrate these accomplishments, our volunteers who gave 20 hours or more were invited to the **2013 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic**. It was held on November 9, and was a beautiful but brisk day at the Pocket Picnic Area. Good times were had by all. There was good food, fellowship, and conversation about the year's stewardship. In attendance and as they appear in the photo left to right were: **Chuck Brock, Jim Bishop, Tom Blackwell, Jim Leatherwood, Charlie**



Crider, Rick Moon, Amy Findley, Gene Findley, Tim Woody, Cary Brock, Chuck Brock, Racheal Larsen, Karen Larsen, Wanda Brown, Gail Milner, Tannis Blackwell, Cindy Leatherwood, Jim Holland, Larry Wheat, Larry Thomas, Troy Brown, Amos Burrell, and Kevin Vasalinda. Also in attendance to show his appreciation was the **District Ranger Jeff Gardner**, who was the photographer.



**The Top Guns**  
Wanda Brown, Troy Brown, Rick Moon, and Larry Thomas

As always we give out some special awards to the **Top Guns**, our volunteers with the most hours for the year. In years past the bar was set around 100 hours, but this year fifteen volunteers contributed more than 100 hours and our four **Top Guns** all contributed 200 plus hours.

**Larry Thomas** is our first top gun, by definition a relative newbie to the official ranks of volunteer, but it's certain that he's no stranger to this group. He's been there from the start, shaping, supporting and nurturing all of these partnerships as they bloomed and grew. After a long and successful career with the Forest Service, he decided to head for the hills for good, re-locating in Murphy, North Carolina and officially adding the title of Team Conasauga Volunteer to his resume. This new retiree certainly shows no signs of letting the grass grow under

his feet, logging in 195 hours in his first official year with a life-time record to date of 220 hours.

**Rick Moon** is our second Top Gun. He is considered both a Thinker and a Doer, accomplishing many projects across the district. Many wonder if he is associated with the Georgia Pinhoti Association or the Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Biking association, and the answer is **Yes**. Not only is he a great “ideas” guy, he is also a big-time Doer who can take those ideas and turn them into action. This year he contributed 255 hours to the district, bringing his lifetime total to 713 hours.

**Troy Brown** is our third Top Gun. When he was a no-show on an early spring workday, I wondered if it was a sign of things to come. Eventually, we learned that he had major knee surgery and was definitely out of commission for a while. A month or so later, I heard that he had been back to the Cohuttas and I was not at all surprised. Even given his months of having to stay in the flatlands and heal, this Top Gun still contributed 271 hours this year, bringing his lifetime total, accumulated since 1991, to an astonishing 8,361 hours.

Finally, our fourth Top Gun and the FY 2013 “Volunteer of the Year” is **Wanda Brown**. For most of you, I’m sure there is no need for an introduction! This originating member of the Conasauga District volunteer program has been a major contributor every year for the past twenty-two years and has received both local and regional awards for her efforts. At this point, I’m pretty sure that she has an entire wardrobe of FS awarded clothing and gear commemorating her extensive contributions. We have no problem giving her more, including a personalized Pulaski embossed with the Team Conasauga Logo, due to the amazing contributions she gives to the District. This year’s Volunteer of the Year contributed 340 hours, bringing Wanda’s lifetime total to 8,430 hours!

## In Conclusion

We would like to extend a very well-deserved Thank You to all of our volunteers who take part in projects here on the Conasauga Ranger District. We could not do it without you. With a great year behind us and another fun filled year ahead we are looking forward to seeing and working with you again. Please stay tuned to the Team Conasauga and other stewardship groups' webpages and newsletters for upcoming events of FY2014. With your help let's keep our contributions high and make this upcoming year even better than the last.

**Thank You!**

